

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken,

We write to you to express deep concern about the intensifying war in Gaza, particularly grave violations against children, and our fear that without an immediate cessation of hostilities and the establishment of a robust bilateral ceasefire, this war will lead to a further loss of civilian life and risk dragging the United States into dangerous and unwise conflict with armed groups across the Middle East. Further, we write urging clarity on your strategic objectives for achieving de-escalation and stability in the region.

We reaffirm our unequivocal condemnation of the Hamas attacks on Israel that took place on October 7th, in which Hamas killed over 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, and captured over 200 hostages, who were subsequently taken to Gaza. While exact figures have not yet been released, Israeli authorities so far have confirmed the identity of 846 civilians killed, including 31 children, and at least 20 children who have been abducted by Palestinian armed groups.^{1 2}

We also share dire concerns with the ongoing Israeli response, in which the Israeli Defense Forces have killed over 11,078 Palestinians, nearly half of whom have been children. During the past 39 days of hostilities, at least 4,506 children have been killed in the Gaza Strip and at least 7,695 children have sustained injuries. Additionally, about 3,250 Palestinians in Gaza, including at least 1,755 children, have been reported missing and are presumed to be trapped or dead under the rubble, awaiting rescue or recovery.³ During this same time, Israeli forces or settlers have killed 51 Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank.^{4 5 6}

1 “Hamas Hostages: Who Are the People Taken from Israel?” BBC News, BBC, 2 Nov. 2023.

2 “What We Know About the Death Toll in Israel From the Hamas-Led Attacks” New York Times, 12 Nov. 2023. Accessed 14 Nov. 2023.

3 Associated Press. “Live Updates: Palestinians Report Deadly Israeli Airstrikes Including in Southern Gaza.” *AP News*, 4 Nov. 2023.

4 “At least 16 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank.” *Al Jazeera*. Accessed 13 Nov. 2023.

5 “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - Reported Impact: Day 39.” United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Accessed 14 Nov. 2023.

6 All casualty statistics are current as of at least 12 Nov. 2023

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We are profoundly shocked by the grave violations of children’s rights in the context of armed conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. International norms require that all parties to an armed conflict protect children and prevent the commission of grave violations against them, including killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, recruitment and use of children, abduction of children, and denial of humanitarian access.⁷

Of the total 2.2 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, nearly half are children. In addition to the threat of widespread Israeli airstrikes on residential buildings and civilian infrastructure, these children face further imminent threats due to Israeli government restrictions on food, water, fuel, and other humanitarian assistance being able to reach these children and their families. To date, 285 Educational facilities in Gaza have been affected, including at least 29 United Nations-run schools.⁸ Eight of these schools were used as emergency shelters for internally displaced people in Gaza, with at least one of them being directly hit in an Israeli airstrike. Two thirds of medical facilities in the Gaza Strip have completely shut down, according to the World Health Organization, including 22 out of Gaza’s 35 hospitals.⁹ Additionally, Israel has now carried out multiple strikes on five refugee camps inside Gaza, resulting in civilian casualties.¹⁰

We commend your Administration’s goals of seeing a major expansion of humanitarian supplies arriving into Gaza. While we greatly welcome your work, it has had limited impact on the ground so far and, we believe, risks undermining the United States’ own credibility in the region.¹¹ We urge an immediate cessation of hostilities in order to stop the bombing and provide much-needed relief to Palestinian civilians.

In his remarks reflecting on the October 7th attacks, the President acknowledged U.S. mistakes in the aftermath of September 11th and advised that an appropriate response “requires being deliberate. It requires asking very hard questions. It requires clarity about the objectives and an honest assessment about whether the path you are on will achieve those objectives.”¹² These wise words should continue to inform U.S. counsel to Israel’s response. Recognizing that there is no military solution that will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we urge your Administration to obtain clarity on the specific strategic objectives of a large-scale ground invasion, their achievability, what may come after Hamas, the risks to hostages and civilians in the region, the

⁷ *The Six Grave Violations – Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict*, United Nations. Accessed 4 Nov. 2023.

⁸ Israel-Palestine: Gaza Death Toll Passes 5,000 with No Ceasefire in Sight | UN News, United Nations. Accessed 4 Nov. 2023.

⁹ “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - Reported Impact: Day 39.”

¹⁰ *No Place of Refuge: Israeli Strikes Hit Camps in Gaza*, Reuters. Accessed 4 Nov. 2023.

¹¹ As of November 13, 2023, only 981 trucks carrying aid have entered Gaza since October 21, 2023.

¹² “Remarks by President Biden on the October 7th Terrorist Attacks and the Resilience of the State of Israel and Its People.” The White House, 18 Oct. 2023.

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national security implications of a multi-front war in the Middle East, and the potential threats to American citizens in the region.

We thank the President for calling for a humanitarian pause so that humanitarian aid may flow and diplomacy may take place. However, given the present lack of an apparent and clear strategic plan, we encourage a redoubling of efforts to achieve rapid de-escalation through a ceasefire and robust, regional engagement that includes international humanitarian organizations. We understand that the Administration has serious concerns regarding the objectives and consequences of a large-scale ground offensive, and we urge you to press this case directly.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to your response.

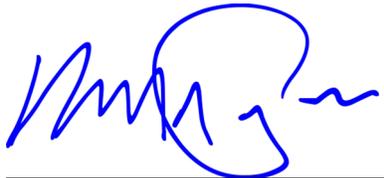
Sincerely,



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress

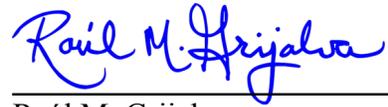


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Delia C. Ramirez
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



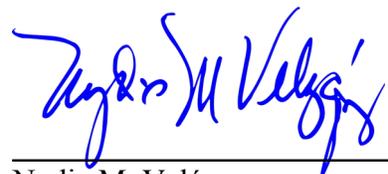
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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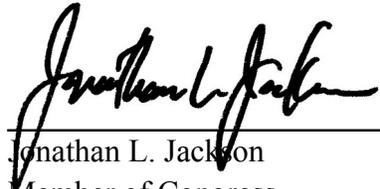


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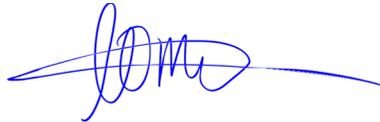
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